CHILD WELFARE AND SOCIAL SERVICES REFORM

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

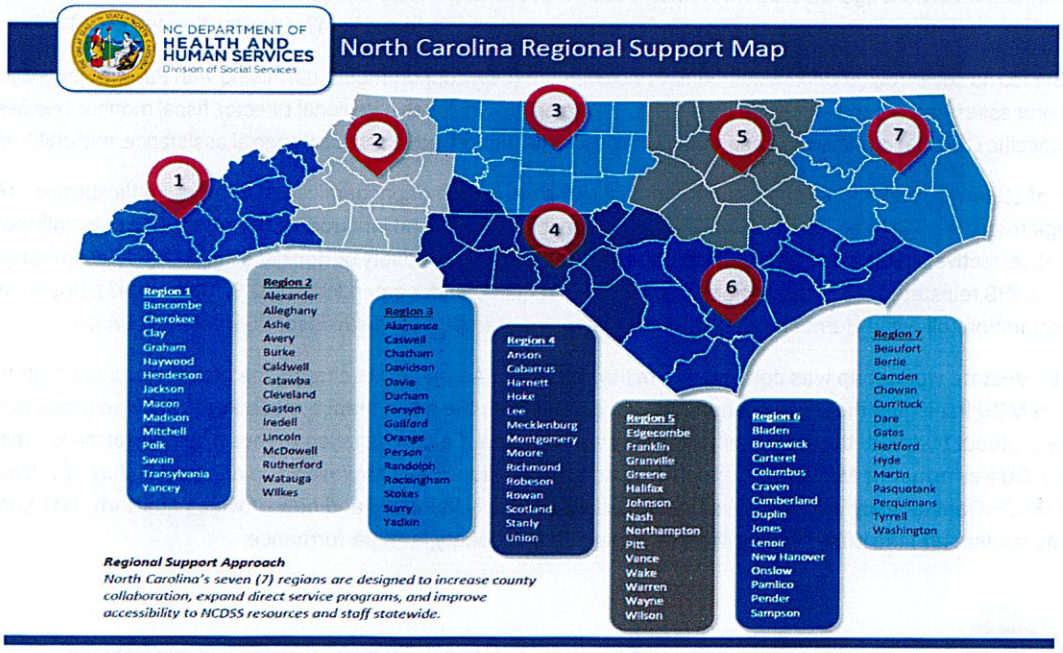
NC Session Law 2017-41, known as Rylan's Law[1], required the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to submit a plan to the Joint Legislative Oversight Committee on Health and Human Services that outlined regional supervision of and collaboration among local social services programs. The law also required DHHS to submit preliminary recommendations to the Committee regarding legislative changes necessary to implement a plan to reform State supervision and accountability for the social services system, including child welfare, adult protective services and guardianship, public assistance, and child support enforcement.

The Social Services Regional Supervision and Collaboration Working Group, known as the Social Services Working Group (SSWG), was formed in 2017 and DHHS contracted with the Center for Support of Families (CSF) to develop and deliver recommendations for reform in a multi-stage process. SSWG and CSF included substantial external stakeholder input gathered through surveys and focus groups held across the state in developing their reports. DHHS senior leadership actively participated as members of the SSWG, and the Secretary's leadership team, along with various DHHS division directors and section chiefs, provided input that informed the CSF report. The preliminary recommendations made by SSWG and CSF were carefully analyzed by DHHS and significantly informed DHHS's recommendations that were presented to the General Assembly on April 10, 2018. The second stage focused on inter-county collaboration, conflicts of interest, and information sharing, leading to a second report that was released on February 20, 2019. All of these efforts culminated in a comprehensive Social Services Reform Plan, which was submitted by the North Carolina Office of State Budget & Management and the Department of Health and Human Services on May 6, 2019.

A. GEOGRAPHIC REGIONS

The Department concurred with the SSWG's recommendations to establish seven regions for the regional supervision of county administered child welfare and other social services. These early considerations included maintaining contiguous regions, avoiding the division of single counties across regions, and accounting for total population, geographic size, and judicial district boundaries. DHHS likewise supported the recommendation to establish physical regional offices, while recognizing that procurement and construction or renovation would require significant time and resources.

We are now operating under the current regional structure, which reflects partnerships, county needs, and implementation realities that have evolved since the initial recommendations were developed.



1 NC Session Law 2017-41, Rylan's Law: https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2017/Bills/House/PDF/H630v6.pdf

B. ROLES, RESPONSIBILITIES AND STAFFING FOR REGIONAL SUPERVISION

North Carolina's Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) structures regional support for its 100 county administered social services agencies through a seven region supervision model established under Session Law 2017 41. While the law directs DHHS to establish regional offices staffed with state personnel to provide closer, more direct supervision and support to counties, dedicated brick and mortar regional office facilities have not been established due to a lack of available funding. In the absence of permanent physical offices, DHHS has implemented the regional model through a combination of virtual operations and the use of existing community or county spaces to support meetings, training, and collaboration.

Each region is led by a Regional Director and supported by a multidisciplinary team of specialists across child welfare, adult services, child support, and economic benefits, typically around eleven staff per region. As of December 2024, all seven Regional Directors had been hired, enabling full activation of the regional leadership model. These directors and the regional teams serve as essential liaisons between DHHS and county DSS agencies, providing coaching, policy guidance, operational support, and monitoring.

Regional teams also identify service trends and systemic issues, driving continuous quality improvement (CQI) and supporting the sharing of best practices across counties. The regional support structure—state supervision with county administration, strengthened by seven regionally aligned support teams—continues to enhance oversight, promote consistency in practice, and improve responsiveness to local needs across North Carolina, even as the Department works toward establishing fully funded, permanent regional office facilities in the future.

C. CURRENT STATUS

In accordance with Session Law 2017-41, Section 3.3, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) is required to submit an annual progress report, outlining the Department's oversight of county-administered social services programs other than medical assistance. The report reviews the implementation and outcomes of the mandated Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) required by N.C.G.S. 108A 74(a2), evaluates county compliance with performance expectations, and details corrective actions taken under State authority.

The MOU, first implemented in SFY 2018–2019, establishes standardized performance expectations and administrative responsibilities for all 100 county social services agencies. DHHS worked closely with county partners during its development, resulting in an agreement that includes 16 core performance measures along with five federally required Child and Family Services Review (CFSR) metrics.

DHHS strengthened its seven region Continuous Quality Improvement (CQI) support model, partnering with Public Knowledge to formalize CQI processes and expand statewide capacity. Each region now includes a Regional Director, fiscal monitor, business liaison, and program specific CQI Specialists across economic services, child support, adult services, special assistance, and child welfare.

In recognition of statewide operational challenges — including the unwinding of pandemic-related program flexibilities - Medicaid Expansion implementation, Tailored Plans rollout, increased service demand, and workforce shortages—DHHS initially paused the issuance of corrective action plans (CAPs), instead continuing to monitor county performance and share best practices. In January 2025, DHHS reinstated the corrective action process as required under amended N.C.G.S. 108A 74(a3). Due to the federal emergency declaration following Hurricane Helene, enforcement was temporarily delayed for 25 western counties.

In 2025, a county–state workgroup was convened to review the MOU. As part of its charge, the group examined both the structure of the MOU itself, and the recommendations associated with the performance measures. This workgroup also developed the protocol that both the state and the county would follow if a county failed to meet their performance measures. The resulting MOU Performance Measures Corrective Action Plan protocol was approved and adopted in July of 2025. The Rylan's Law/HB630 Transparency and Wellness Dashboard was publicly launched and now provides quarterly data updates, offering county leaders and the public a clear view of statewide and county-level performance.

PERFORMANCE MEASURES AT-A-GLANCE

ATTACHMENT I

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS:

The Standard Measure is the measure set forth in federal or state law, rule or policy that governs the particular program. This is the Measure that all counties are ultimately aiming to achieve.

The County Performance Measure is the measure that the County is required to achieve to be in compliance with this MOU. For some programs, the County's Performance Measure will be the same as the Standard Measure. For other programs, the County's Performance Measure may be greater or less than the Standard Measure, dependent upon previous year's performance.

The Report of Performance is the period of time in which a County's response to a particular performance requirement is measured and reported.

ADULT PROTECTIVE SERVICES (APS)

	Standard Measure	County Performance Measure	Rationale and Authority	Report of Performance
1	The County will complete 85% of APS evaluations involving allegations of abuse or neglect within 30 days of the report.	The County will ensure that 85% of all APS evaluations involving allegations of abuse or neglect are completed and a case decision is made within 30 days of the APS report date.	Responding quickly to allegations of adult maltreatment is essential to case decision-making to protect the adult. State law requires that a prompt and thorough evaluation is made of all reports of adult maltreatment. N.C.G.S. § 108A-103 Article 6	Monthly
2	The County will complete 85% of APS evaluations involving allegations of exploitation within 45 days of the report.	The County will ensure that 85% of all APS evaluations involving allegations of exploitation are completed and a case decision is made within 45 days of the APS report date.	Protecting a disabled adult from exploitation is critical to ensuring their safety and well-being. State law requires a prompt and thorough evaluation is made of all reports of adult exploitation. N.C.G.S. § 108A-103 Article 6	Monthly

CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES

	Standard Measure	County Performance Measure	Rationale and Authority	Report of Performance
1	Percentage of paternities established or acknowledged for children born out of wedlock.	The County paternity establishment performance level must exceed 50% at the end of the State Fiscal Year (June 30).	Paternity establishment is an essential component in obtaining and enforcing support orders for children. 45 CFR § 305.33 (b) N.C.G.S. 110-129.1	Annual

2	Percentage of child support cases that have a court order establishing support obligations.	The County support order establishment performance level must exceed 50% at the end of the State Fiscal Year (June 30).	A court order creates a legal obligation for a noncustodial parent to provide financial support to their children. 45 CFR § 305.33 (d)N.C.G.S. 110-129.1	Annual
3	Percentage of current child support paid.	The County current collections performance level must exceed 40% at the end of the State Fiscal Year (June 30).	The current collections rate is an indicator for the regular and timely payment of child support obligations. 45 CFR § 305.33 (e)N.C.G.S. 110-129.1	Annual
4	Percentage of cases received a payment toward arrears.	The County arrearage collections performance level must exceed 40% at the end of the State Fiscal Year (June 30).	Collection of child support has been shown to reduce child poverty rates and improve child well-being 45 CFR § 305.33 (h)N.C.G.S. 110-129.1	Annual

CHILD WELFARE - FOSTER CARE

	Standard Measure	County Performance Measure	Rationale and Authority	Report of Performance
1	The County will ensure that 95% of all foster youth have a face-to-face visit with the social worker each month.	The County will ensure that 95% of all foster youth have a face-to-face visit with the social worker each month.	Ensure the ongoing safety of children and the engagement and well-being of families. Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law 109–288, section 7) amending Section 422(b) of the Social Security Act (42 USC 622(b))	Monthly

ENERGY PROGRAMS

	Standard Measure	County Performance Measure	Rationale and Authority	Report of Performance
1	The County will process 95% of Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) applications, with no heat or cooling source, or applications with a health-related crisis with a disconnect, final, or past due notice within one (1) business day from the date of application or date all verification is received, whichever comes first.	The County will process 95% of Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) applications, with no heat or cooling source, within one (1) business day from the date of application or date all verification is received, whichever comes first.	Ensure that eligible individuals in a household without a heating or cooling source receive relief as soon as possible. 42 USC §§ 8621-8630	Monthly

2	The County will process 95% of Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) applications without a health-related crisis that have heat or cooling source with a past due or final notice, within two (2) business days from the date of application or date all verification is received, whichever comes first.	The County will process 95% of Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) applications, that have heat or cooling source with a past due or final notice, within two (2) business days from the date of application or date all verification is received, whichever comes first.	Ensure that eligible households who are in danger of losing a heating or cooling source receive financial assistance to avert the crisis. 42 USC §§ 8621-8630	Monthly

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES

	Standard Measure	County Performance Measure	Rationale and Authority	Report of Performance
1	The County will process 95% of expedited FNS applications within the timeframe that allows the household to have access to the FNS benefits on or before the 7th calendar day from the date of application.	The County will process 95% of expedited FNS applications within the timeframe that allows the household to have access to the FNS benefits on or before the 7th calendar day from the date of application.	Ensure all expedited FNS applications are processed within required timeframes. 7CFR § 273.2 FNS Manual: Section 425 FNS Administrative Letter 1-2015	Monthly
2	The County will process 95% of regular FNS applications within the timeframe that allows the household to have access to the FNS benefits on or before the 30th calendar day from the date of application.	The County will process 95% of regular FNS applications within the timeframe that allows the household to have access to the FNS benefits on or before the 30th calendar day from the date of application.	Ensure all regular FNS applications are processed within required timeframes. 7CFR § 273.2 FNS Manual: Section 420 FNS Administrative Letter 1-2015	Monthly
3	The County will ensure that 95% of FNS recertifications are processed on time, each month.	The County will ensure that 95% of FNS recertifications are processed on time, each month.	Ensure that eligible families have their recertification benefits processed in a timely manner without interruption. 7 CFR § 273.14	Monthly

SPECIAL ASSISTANCE (SA)

	Standard Measure	County Performance Measure	Rationale and Authority	Report of Performance
1	The County will process 85% of Special Assistance for the Aged (SAA) applications within 45 calendar days of the application date.	The County is responsible for ensuring timely application processing. To meet program standards, **at least 85% of all Special Assistance for the Aged (SAA) applications must be completed and processed within 45 calendar days of the application date.**	Ensure eligible individuals receive supplemental payments to support stable living arrangements. Timely application processing of SAA benefits is essential to an individual's proper care and treatment. 10A NCAC 71P .0604	Monthly

2	The County will process 85% of Special Assistance for the Disabled (SAD) applications within 60 calendar days of the application date.	The County is responsible for ensuring timely application processing. To meet program standards, **at least 85% of all Special Assistance for the Aged (SAA) applications must be completed and processed within 45 calendar days of the application date.**	Ensure eligible individuals receive supplemental payments to support stable living arrangements. Timely application processing of SAD benefits is essential to an individual's proper care and treatment. 10A NCAC 71P .0604	Monthly

WORK FIRST

	Standard Measure	County Performance Measure	Rationale and Authority	Report of Performance
1	The County will process 95% of Work First applications within 45 days of receipt.	The County will process 95% of Work First applications within 45 days of receipt.	Ensure that eligible families receive Work First benefits in a timely manner. NC TANF State Plan FFY 2026-2028 N.C.G.S. 108A-31	Monthly
2	The County will process 95% of Work First recertifications within 60 calendar days prior to the last day of the current certification period.	The County will process 95% of Work First recertifications within 60 calendar days prior to the last day of the current certification period.	Ensure that Work First families continue to receive assistance and benefits without unnecessary interruption. NC TANF State Plan FFY 2026-2028 N.C.G.S. 108A-31	Monthly

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PERFORMANCE MEASURES AT-A-GLANCE

Note: These Performance Measures are not subject to corrective action under 108A-74 for MOU 2026-27 and 2027-28

ATTACHMENT II

PERFORMANCE REQUIREMENTS:

North Carolina completed round four of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) in 2025. The purpose of these reviews is to determine compliance with Title IV-B and Title IV-E plan requirements, and in doing so, assess the extent to which federally-funded child welfare programs function effectively to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families with whom they have contact.

The overall goals of the reviews are to:

- Ensure conformity with Title IV-B and Title IV-E child welfare requirements using a framework focused on safety, permanency and well-being through seven outcomes and seven systemic factors;
- Determine what is happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services including the legal and judicial processes; and
- Assist state child welfare systems in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes.*

The review required North Carolina to develop a Program Improvement Plan to address outcomes the state did not meet.

Executive Order No. 14359, titled "Fostering the Future," with a goal of improving child welfare outcomes throughout the United States was signed in November 2025. As part of a broad effort to focus on durable outcome improvement, supported by strong evidence, the initiative — A Home for Every Child — is being launched to orient improvement efforts around outcomes that matter most: ensuring every child has access to a safe, stable, and loving home, and that states are supported in building the capacity and systems to make that possible. **In support of this initiative and in an effort to strengthen the CFSR process, a pilot opportunity for states in various stages of CFSR Round 4 is being created to center their program improvement efforts around the A Home for Every Child goal.**

The NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services, is considering adopting this Performance Improvement Plan. However, all statutory and regulatory provisions under 45 CFR §§ 1355.35-36 and 42 U.S.C. 1320a-2a remain in effect. Thus, the statewide assessment and onsite review processes remain the same. Since these measures will be included in the Data Review and performance for CFSR Round IV, counties need to continue monitoring and striving to achieve progress toward accomplishing these measures, to ensure that North Carolina can be determined to be in "substantial conformity." To assist counties in monitoring and achieving these progress measures, please visit the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill website to view data provided by UNC-CH.

**Child and Family Services Review Technical Bulletin #12 Announcement of the CFSR Round 4 reviews, August 2020, Section I. Context and Overview of Next Round of CFSR – Round 4, pp 1-3*

	Standard Measure	Rationale and Authority
1	The County will initiate 95% of all screened-in reports within required timeframes	Ensure that allegations of abuse, neglect and dependency are initiated timely. The timeframes for initiating an investigation of child maltreatment are defined in state law as immediately, within 24 hours, or within 72 hours depending on the nature and severity of the alleged maltreatment. NC General Statutes § 7B-302; 10A NCAC 70A .0105; NCDHHS Family Services Manual: Vol. 1, Chapter VIII: Child Protective Services, Section 1408 - Investigative & Family Assessments

	Standard Measure	Rationale and Authority
2	For all children who were victims of maltreatment during a 12-month period, no more than 9.1% received a subsequent finding of maltreatment.	Ensure that children who have been substantiated as abused, neglected or dependent are protected from further harm. National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators established by the Children's Bureau to determine conformity with Title IV-B and Title IV-E of the Social Security Act and the Child and Family Services Review.
3	The County will provide leadership for ensuring that 40.5% of children who enter foster care in a 12-month period are discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care.	Ensure that children in out-of-home placements are able to obtain safe and permanent homes as soon as possible after removal from their home. National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators established by the Children's Bureau to determine conformity with Title IV-B and Title IV-E of the Social Security Act and the Child and Family Services Review.
4	The County will provide leadership for ensuring that, of children who enter foster care in a 12-month period who were discharged within 12 months to reunification, kinship care, or guardianship, no more than 8.3% re-enter foster care within 12 months of their discharge.	Ensure that children exiting foster care are in stable homes so that they do not re-enter foster care. CFSR: Safety Outcome 1: Children are, first and foremost, protected from abuse and neglect. National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators established by the Children's Bureau to determine conformity with Title IV-B and Title IV-E of the Social Security Act and the Child and Family Services Review.
5	The County will provide leadership for ensuring that, of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period in the county, the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care will not exceed 4.1%.	Ensure that children who are removed from their homes experience stability while they are in foster care. CFSR: Permanency Outcome 1: Children have permanency and stability in their living situations. National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators established by the Children's Bureau to determine conformity with Title IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act and the Child and Family Services Review.

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ADULT SERVICES PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Adult Services

Child Support Services

Child Welfare Services

Energy Programs

Food and Nutrition Services

Special Assistance

Work First Services

WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan's Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of seven fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2026-27 and 2027-28 Memorandum of Agreement. The seven fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, 6) Special Assistance and 7) Work First Services.

Why Were These Adult Services Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes two Adult Services performance measures focused on ensuring timely response and protection for vulnerable adults. These measures address immediate safety and protection from abuse, neglect and exploitation, as well as longer-term stability and well-being. The goal is to provide services and protections to individuals unable to meet their essential needs, ensuring their safety while supporting them to remain in their homes through the use of the least restrictive interventions and settings possible.

BASIS

N.C.G.S 108A-103 Article 6 requires that a prompt and thorough evaluation be conducted upon receipt of a report that an adult may need protective services. The evaluation must be completed and a case decision made within 30 days for allegations of abuse or neglect and within 45 days for allegations of exploitation.

A Closer Look: Adult Protective Services Performance Measures

1. APS evaluations involving allegations of abuse or neglect are completed and a case decision is made within 30 days of the APS report date for 85% of cases.

RATIONALE

Adult Protective Services are considered emergency services and involve situations of significant risk, including the potential for irreparable harm or death. North Carolina General Statute §108A-103 requires a prompt and thorough evaluation of all reports of adult maltreatment and does not allow for the provision of services until the evaluation is complete. Timely completion and case decision-making are essential to ensuring the safety and protection of vulnerable adults. The 85% standard reflects recognition that extenuating circumstances may impact timeliness while demonstrating substantial compliance with statutory requirements.

BASIS

State law requires the director of social services, upon receipt of a report that an adult may need protective services, to conduct a prompt and thorough evaluation to determine whether the adult needs protective services and what services are needed. The evaluation must be completed and a case decision made within 30 days for allegations of abuse or neglect.

- NC State Statute: NC G.S 108A-103

2. APS evaluations involving allegations of exploitation are completed and a case decision is made within 45 days of the APS report date for 85% of cases.

RATIONALE

Adult Protective Services are considered emergency services and require timely action to assess financial harm, identify ongoing risk, and prevent further loss. The statute addresses exploitation of both assets and the person. These cases may involve complex financial records, third-party coordination, and legal processes. North Carolina General Statute §108A-103 requires a prompt and thorough evaluation of all reports of adult maltreatment. The 45-day timeframe allows for necessary information gathering while maintaining timely completion and case decision making. The 85% standard reflects expected performance while acknowledging extenuating circumstances.

BASIS

State law requires the director of social services, upon receipt of a report that an adult may need protective services, to conduct a prompt and thorough evaluation to determine whether the adult needs protective services and what services are needed. The evaluation must be completed and a case decision within 45 days for allegations of exploitation.

- NC State Statute: NC G.S 108A-103

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The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of seven fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2026-27 and 2027-28 Memorandum of Agreement. The seven fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, 6) Special Assistance and 7) Work First Services.

Why Were These Child Support Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes four child support performance measures. The aim of the performance measures is to ensure that child support is a reliable, accessible source of income so that custodial families can become self-sufficient. Studies have shown that policies to collect child support not only increase financial resources to families, but their impact on payments increase visitation and contact between the children and their parents.

BASIS

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Acts (PRWORA) of 1996, Section 454 of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 654), 42 U.S.C. 658a(b)(6), Public Law 105-200, Section 201, and N.C.G.S. 110-129.1(a)(9) establish guidelines for performance and an incentive system to provide additional payments to any State based on its performance under the program. The Child Support Performance and Incentive Act of 1998 (CSPIA) (Public Law 105-200, Section 201) provides the legal basis for the incentive award system. The purpose of Title IV-D incentives is to reward child support programs for good performance results, while holding these programs accountable for poor performance.

Eligibility for and the amount of incentive funding depends on all of the following:

- The total amount of federal funds that are available for a fiscal year.
- The state performance levels in five program service areas (paternity establishment, support establishment, current support payments, payments toward arrearages, and cost effectiveness). The federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) distributes a shared pool of federal incentive funds to the states each year. To receive these funds, states must reach a specific level of performance for each of these program service areas.
- The reliability of the state's data as determined by OCSE's annual Data Reliability Audit (DRA). States must prove that their child support collection data in their computer systems is ninety-five percent (95%) reliable and accurate, based on the DRA (pursuant to 45 CFR 305).
- The relative performance levels of other states.

Each federal fiscal year, 85% of the federal incentive funds is shared with the counties, based on their performance in the program service areas mentioned above. The North Carolina Child Support Services (NCCSS) Central Office retains the remaining 15% to enhance centralized child support services.

Federal Regulations 45 CFR 303.52 require state IV-D programs to develop a standard methodology for the disbursement of incentive funds to the county/local agencies that are designated as the administrators of their child support programs.

NOTE: For 2026-27 and 2027-28, the Child Support MOU measures will be separated from the goals designed to ensure continuous quality improvement of our child support program. All Child Support performance measures will be growth measures.

A Closer Look: Child Support Performance Measures

In accordance with Federal Regulations at 45 CFR 305.2, the federal Office of Child Support Enforcement (OCSE) determines incentive funding for states by measuring performance levels in these four program areas identified below. County performance measures are established not only to ensure that the child support program meets the performance measures set by the federal government, but that the program remains focused on improving the economic self-sufficiency of families with children. Counties falling below the minimum federal performance measure are subject to a corrective action plan.

1. County paternity establishment performance level must exceed 50% at the end of the State Fiscal Year (June 30).

NOTE: For 2026-27 and 2027-28, all Child Support performance measures will be growth measures.

RATIONALE

Paternity establishment is an essential component in obtaining and enforcing support orders for children. The Paternity Establishment Percentage (PEP) is the percentage of children born out of wedlock for whom paternity has been established or acknowledged.

BASIS

Monthly performance is calculated for county/local agencies by determining the number of children in the IV-D caseload who have been born out-of-wedlock and for whom paternity has been established or acknowledged to the total number of children as of the end of the preceding state fiscal year who were born out-of-wedlock. Federal regulations require states to have a 90% minimum PEP rate to earn full incentives and avoid penalties to TANF block grant funding. To be eligible for any portion of the incentive dollars, the applicable percentage must be no lower than 50%.

- Federal Code: 42 U.S.C. 652(g)(1)(A)
- Federal Code: 42 U.S.C. 658a(b)(6)(A)
- North Carolina General Statute: 110-129.1(a)(9)

2. County support order establishment performance level must exceed 50% at the end of the State Fiscal Year (June 30).

NOTE: For 2026-27 and 2027-28, all Child Support performance measures will be growth measures.

RATIONALE

A child support order obligates noncustodial parents to provide financial support for their children and stipulates the amount of the obligation and how it is to be paid. Child support payments enable parents who do not live with their children to fulfill their financial responsibility to them by contributing to the payment of childrearing costs.

BASIS

Monthly performance is calculated for county/local agencies by determining the number of IV-D cases with child support orders as a percentage of their overall caseload. The average of these monthly percentages is reported at the end of the federal fiscal year. Federal regulations require states to have an 80% minimum of cases under order rate to earn full

incentives and avoid penalties to TANF block grant funding. To be eligible for any portion of the incentive dollars, the applicable percentage must be no lower than 50%.

- Federal Code: 42 U.S.C. 652(g)(1)(A)
- Federal Code: 42 U.S.C. 658a(b)(6)(B)
- North Carolina General Statute: N.C.G.S. 110-129.1(a)(9)

3. County current collections performance level must exceed 40% at the end of the State Fiscal Year (June 30).

NOTE: For 2026-27 and 2027-28, all Child Support performance measures will be growth measures.

RATIONALE

The current collection rate is an indicator for the regular and timely payment of child support. Higher rates mean better compliance with the support order and lower accumulation of arrears.

BASIS

"Current support" is the money that is applied to current support obligations and does not include payments toward arrearages. Monthly performance is calculated by determining the amount of current support that is collected as a percentage of the total amount of current support obligations due. The average of these monthly percentages is reported at the end of the federal fiscal year. Federal regulations require states to have an 80% minimum current support collections rate to earn full incentives and avoid penalties to TANF block grant funding. To be eligible for any portion of the incentive dollars, the applicable percentage must be no lower than 40%.

- Federal Code: 42 U.S.C. 652(g)(1)(A)
- Federal Code: 42 U.S.C. 658a(b)(6)(C)
- North Carolina General Statute: 110-129.1(a)(9)

4. County arrearage collections performance level must exceed 40% at the end of the State Fiscal year (June 30).

NOTE: For 2026-27 and 2027-28, all Child Support performance measures will be growth measures.

RATIONALE

Child support collections have been shown to reduce the child poverty rate and improve child well-being. Studies also show that receipt of child support has a positive effect on academic achievement and improves young children's cognitive development.

BASIS

Arrearage collections is the money that was applied to past-due support on cases that have a past-due child support obligation. Federal regulations require states to have an 80% minimum current support collections rate to earn full incentives. To be eligible for any portion of the incentive dollars, the applicable percentage must be no lower than 40%.

- Federal Code: 42 U.S.C. 652(g)(1)(A)
- Federal Code: 42 U.S.C. 658a(b)(6)(D)
- NC General Statute: 110-129.1(a)(9)

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Work First Services

WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan's Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of seven fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2026-27 and 2027-28 Memorandum of Agreement. The seven fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, 6) Special Assistance and 7) Work First Services.

Why Were These Child Welfare Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes six child welfare performance measures. Together, the six measures address the immediate safety, ongoing protection from abuse and neglect, and long-term security and well-being for children entering the state's child welfare system.

BASIS

The federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) of 1974 and subsequent amendments provide the foundational guidance for government's role in child protection. CAPTA requires states to identify a minimum set of acts or behaviors that define child abuse and neglect and establish timeframes for responding to reports of abuse and neglect. Other federal law, funding and regulations also govern components of child welfare — for example, both Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act (SSA). Title IV-B addresses the provision of child welfare services that can be used for prevention of and response to child abuse and neglect. Title IV-E of the Social Security Act (SSA) focuses on providing safe and stable care for children who are in out-of-home care due to child maltreatment until they can achieve placement permanency by being safely returned home, placed permanently with adoptive families, or placed in other planned arrangements. The Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part 45 1357.10 further defines requirements for child welfare services.

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE INSTRUMENTS

North Carolina participated in round four of the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSR) in 2025. The purpose of these reviews is to determine compliance with Title IV-B and Title IV-E plan requirements, and in doing so, assess the extent to which federally-funded child welfare programs function effectively to promote the safety, permanency, and well-being of children and families with whom they have contact.

The overall goals of the reviews remain to:

- Ensure conformity with Title IV-B and Title IV-E child welfare requirements using a framework focused on safety, permanency and well-being through seven outcomes and seven systemic factors;
- Determine what is happening to children and families as they are engaged in child welfare services including the legal and judicial processes; and
- Assist state child welfare systems in helping children and families achieve positive outcomes.*

To this end, the NC Department of Health and Human Services, Division of Social Services is advising counties that since these measures will be included in the Data Review and performance for CFSR Round IV, counties need to continue monitoring and striving to achieve progress toward accomplishing these measures, to ensure that North Carolina can be determined to be in "substantial conformity." In an effort to assist counties in monitoring and achieving these progress measures, visit the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill's website for data provided by UNC-CH.

* Child and Family Services Review Technical Bulletin #12 Announcement of the CFSR Round 4 reviews, August 2020, Section I. Context and Overview of Next Round of CFSR – Round 4, pp 1-3

The federal Children's Bureau assesses states for "substantial conformity" with federal requirements for child welfare services through a periodic Child and Family Services Review (CFSR). Federal guidelines define "substantial conformity" to mean the measure is achieved in 95% of cases reviewed. Two relevant tools are used to evaluate state compliance during the CFSR. They are:

- National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators: The Data Indicators are aggregate measures, calculated using available administrative data. These measures look at outcomes for children, for example, whether a child is: a victim of child abuse or neglect while in foster care; a repeat victim of abuse or neglect; or able to achieve a permanent home in 12 months.

- The Onsite Review Instrument (OSRI) includes only a limited sample of case reviews, interviews with children and families engaged in services, and interviews with community stakeholders – such as courts, community agencies, foster families, caseworkers, and service providers. The OSRI looks at ***outcomes for children and the type and quality of services children in child welfare services receive***. The OSRI involves an intensive review of small samplings of family case records and looks not only at whether a particular service or action occurred, but whether it was performed in a quality manner. Therefore, the OSRI measures are NOT used as a basis for the NCDHHS County Performance Measures, because data for the Performance Measures must be available for all counties and all cases and recipients of services.

A Closer Look: Child Welfare Performance Measures

1. County will initiate 95% of all screened in reports within required timeframes.

NOTE: This measure is a growth measure. Performance over prior years will be compiled and shared with counties.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure allegations of child abuse, neglect and dependency are initiated within mandated timeframes. This measure addresses how quickly a "screened in" report of child maltreatment (physical, sexual or psychological abuse, neglect, dependency, or human trafficking) must be followed up on with a full investigation. A "screened in report" means that information gathered in the report of child maltreatment has been determined by a county child welfare intake caseworker and supervisors to meet the legal definition of child maltreatment. That same caseworker and their supervisor will determine the urgency of conducting the investigation depending on the nature and severity of the alleged abuse, neglect, exploitation, or dependency.

BASIS

In North Carolina, the timeframes for initiating an investigation of child maltreatment are defined in state law as immediately, 24 or 72 hours, depending on the severity of the alleged abuse. NC Administrative Rule and the NCDHHS Family Services Manual further define the processes for adhering to the state law.

- NC State Statute: G.S. §7B-302
- NC Administrative Rule: 10A NCAC 70A.0105
- NCDHHS Family Services Manual: Vol 1, Chapter VIII, Section 1408 Investigative and Family Assessments

2. For children who were victims of maltreatment during a 12-month period, no more than 9.1% received a subsequent finding of maltreatment.

NOTE: This measure is a growth measure. Performance over prior years will be compiled and shared with counties.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that children who have been substantiated as abused, neglected or dependent are protected from further harm. This measure assesses whether the child welfare agency was successful in preventing subsequent maltreatment of a child if the child was the subject of a substantiated or indicated report of maltreatment.

BASIS

This performance measure is one of the National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators that the Children's Bureau uses to determine state's conformity with Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act through the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The National Standard is that the recurrence of substantiated or indicated maltreatment is 9.1% or less.

- National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators: pages 3, 4 and 6

3. The county will ensure that 95% of all foster youth have a face-to-face visit by the social worker each month.

NOTE: This is now a Performance Measure.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure the ongoing safety of children and the engagement and well-being of families. Caseworkers meet with children and families to monitor children's safety and well-being; assess the ongoing service needs of children, families and foster parents; engage biological and foster parents in developing case plans; assess permanency options for the child; monitor family progress toward established goals; and ensure that children and parents are receiving necessary services. Federal funding is contingent on the state ensuring that the safety and well-being of children in foster care is assured by a monthly face-to-face visit.

BASIS

The Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 amended Part B of Title IV of the Social Security Act to require that, "at a minimum ... children are visited on a monthly basis and that the caseworker visits are well-planned and focused on issues pertinent to case planning and service delivery to ensure the safety, permanency, and well-being of the children."

- Child and Family Services Improvement Act of 2006 Section 7 – Monthly Caseworker Standard; revises Section 422(b) of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 622(b))

4. The county will provide leadership for ensuring that 40.5% of children who enter foster care in a 12-month period are discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care.

NOTE: This measure is a growth measure. Performance over prior years will be compiled and shared with counties.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that children in out-of-home placements are able to obtain safe and permanent homes as soon as possible after removal from their homes. Permanency includes discharges from foster care to reunification with a child's parents or primary caregivers, living with a relative, guardianship, or adoption.

BASIS

This performance measure is one of the National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators that the Children's Bureau uses to determine state's conformity with Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act through the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The National Standard is that at least 40.5% of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period are discharged to permanency within 12 months of entering foster care.

- National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators: pages 3, 4 and 6

5. The county will provide leadership to ensure that, of children who enter foster care in a 12-month period and who were discharged within 12 months to reunification, kinship care, guardianship, or adoption, that no more than 8.3% re-enter foster care within 12 months of their discharge.

NOTE: This measure is a growth measure. Performance over prior years will be compiled and shared with counties.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that children exiting foster care either through reunification guardianship or adoption are in stable homes so that they do not re-enter foster care. The measure assesses whether the agency's programs and practice are effective in supporting reunification and other permanency goals so that children do not return to foster care.

BASIS

This performance measure is one of the National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators that the Children's Bureau uses to determine state's conformity with Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act through the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The National Standard is that no more than 8.3% of all children who enter into and are discharged from foster care within a 12-month period re-enter foster care within 12 months of their discharge.

- National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators: pages 5 and 6

6. The county will provide leadership to ensure that, of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period in the county, the rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care will not exceed 4.1%.

NOTE: This measure is a growth measure. Performance over prior years will be compiled and shared with counties.

RATIONALE

Research shows that children who experience fewer placement changes are more likely to experience fewer school changes, less trauma and distress, and fewer mental health and behavioral problems. Research also suggests that fewer placements therefore contribute to better academic achievement and lasting positive relationships with an adult. This measure assesses whether the agency ensures that children whom the agency removes from their homes experience stability while they are in foster care.

BASIS

This performance measure is one of the National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators that the Children's Bureau uses to determine state's conformity with Titles IV-B and IV-E of the Social Security Act through the Child and Family Services Reviews (CFSRs). The National Standard is that of all children who enter foster care in a 12-month period, the average rate of placement moves per 1,000 days of foster care does not exceed 4.1%.

- National Standards for State Performance on Statewide Data Indicators: pages 5 and 6

2026-27 & 2027-28 NCDHHS/COUNTY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

ENERGY PROGRAMS PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Adult Services
Child Support Services
Child Welfare Services
Energy Programs
Food and Nutrition Services
Special Assistance
Work First Services

WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan's Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of seven fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2026-27 and 2027-28 Memorandum of Agreement. The seven fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, 6) Special Assistance and 7) Work First Services.

Why Were These Energy Programs Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes two Energy Performance measures. Energy programs help low-income families, seniors and adults with home heating and cooling to protect their health and well-being. These energy programs provide financial assistance so that vulnerable populations in our communities do not have to make difficult choices between heating and cooling their homes or affording other basic necessities such as food, medicine or shelter. Together the two measures address the federal requirements to assist households with the lowest incomes that pay a high proportion of household energy bills.

BASIS

The Federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) Statute and Regulations and subsequent amendments provide the foundational guidance for government's role in the administration of the Energy program. The LIHEAP statute is codified in the United States Code at 42 U.S.C. § 8621-8630 (2008).

The US HHS regulations for the LIHEAP block grant are found in 45 C.F.R. § 96. Subparts A-F, H. The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) conducts compliance reviews. States determined to be in noncompliance face penalties of repayment of misspent funds and/or withholding of federal funds.

A Closer Look: Energy Programs Performance Measures

1. The County will process 95% of Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) applications, with no heat or cooling source or applications with a health-related crisis with a disconnect, final, or past due notice, within one (1) business day from the date of application or date all verification is received, whichever comes first.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that eligible individuals in a household without a heating or cooling source receive relief as soon as possible.

BASIS

Federal Code requires that within one business day after a household applies for crisis benefits, the State will provide assistance that will resolve the energy crisis if a household is eligible to receive benefits and has services disconnected or is in a health-related life-threatening situation. North Carolina Administrative Code provides regulations on eligibility criteria.

- Federal Regulation: 42 U.S.C. § 8621-8630 (2008)
- NC Administrative Code: 10A NCAC 71V

2. The County will process 95% of Crisis Intervention Program (CIP) applications without a health-related crisis that have a heat or cooling source disconnect notice within one 1) business day from the date of application or date all verification is received, whichever comes first.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that eligible households who are in danger of losing a heating or cooling source receive financial assistance to avert the crisis.

BASIS

Federal Code requires that within 48 hours after a household applies for crisis benefits, the State will provide some form of assistance that will resolve the energy crisis if such household is eligible to receive such benefits and is in a life-threatening situation without a health-related crisis. North Carolina Administrative Code provides regulations on eligibility criteria.

- Federal Regulation: 42 U.S.C. § 8621-8630 (2008)
- NC Administrative Code: 10A NCAC 71V

2026-27 & 2027-28 NCDHHS/COUNTY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Adult Services
Child Support Services
Child Welfare Services
Energy Programs
Food and Nutrition Services
Special Assistance
Work First Services

WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan's Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

The law requires the agreement to contain performance requirements and administrative responsibilities. This fact sheet is one of seven fact sheets describing the 21 performance measures in the 2026-27 and 2027-28 Memorandum of Agreement. The seven fact sheets address: 1) Adult Services, 2) Child Support Services, 3) Child Welfare Services, 4) Energy Programs, 5) Food and Nutrition Services, 6) Special Assistance and 7) Work First Services.

Why Were These Food and Nutrition Services Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes three Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) performance measures. Research shows that FNS Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits reduce poverty and food insecurity, and that this leads to improved health and economic outcomes over the long-term, especially for those who receive SNAP as children.

BASIS

The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (as amended through P.L.113-79, Effective Feb. 7, 2014) provides the foundational guidance for administration of the FNS program.

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE AND STATE INSTRUMENTS

The USDA is mandated by federal regulations to monitor program administration and operation of the FNS program. Monitoring of the state's compliance is completed through the Management Evaluation process. The Management Evaluation addresses and assesses State agency achievement of program objectives and FNS' strategic performance objectives and priorities.

A Closer Look: Food and Nutrition Services Performance Measures

1. The County will process 95% of expedited FNS applications within the timeframe that allows the household to have access to the FNS benefits on or before the 7th calendar day from the date of application.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure all households which are considered expedited FNS applications are processed within the required timeframe. A food-secure household means that all members of the household receiving FNS benefits have access to healthy and nutritious food to support the health and well-being of the family including children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

BASIS

The State is required to ensure benefits are available to the household no later than thirty (30) calendar days following the date of application. To ensure households are provided with benefits in a timely manner, FNS applications and reapplications must be approved no later than the twenty-fifth (25th) calendar day from the date of the application for regular FNS application and no later than four (4) calendar days for households identified as expedited.

- Federal Regulation: 7 CFR 274.2
- Federal Regulation: FNS Manual: Section 420
- Federal Regulation: FNS Manual: Section 425
- Federal Program Policy: FNS Administrative Letter 1-2015

2. The County will process 95% of regular FNS applications within the timeframe that allows the household to have access to the FNS benefits on or before the 30th calendar day from the date of application.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure all regular FNS applications are processed within the required timeframe. A food-secure household means that all members of the household receiving FNS benefits have access to healthy and nutritious food to support the health and well-being of the family including children, the elderly and people with disabilities.

BASIS

The State is required to ensure benefits are available to the household no later than thirty (30) calendar days following the date of application. To ensure households are provided with benefits in a timely manner, FNS applications and reapplications must be approved no later than the twenty-fifth (25th) calendar day from the date of the application for regular FNS application and no later than four (4) calendar days for households identified as expedited.

- Federal Regulation: 7 CFR 274.2
- Federal Regulation: FNS Manual: Section 420
- Federal Regulation: FNS Manual: Section 425
- Federal Program Policy: FNS Administrative Letter 1-2015

3. The County will ensure that 95% of FNS recertifications are processed within the required timeframes each month.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that families that were previously determined eligible have their recertification for benefits processed in a timely manner to ensure uninterrupted access to healthy and nutritious food to support the health and well-being of families that continue to be eligible for FNS benefits.

BASIS

In accordance with federal regulation, the State is required to ensure that households who received a notice of expiration and reapplied, receive either a notice of eligibility or a notice of denial no later than thirty (30) days from the last allotment received.

- Federal Regulation: 7 CFR 273.14 Recertification

2026-27 & 2027-28 NCDHHS/COUNTY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

STATE/COUNTY SPECIAL ASSISTANCE PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Adult Services

Child Support Services

Child Welfare Services

Energy Programs

Food and Nutrition Services

Special Assistance

Work First Services

WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan's Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

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Why Were These State/County Special Assistance Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes two State-County Special Assistance measures. Paired with the two Adult Services measures, these measures address the immediate safety, ongoing protection from abuse and neglect, and long-term security and well-being of older adults and individuals with disabilities. The goal is to provide services and protections to individuals and families experiencing serious health and safety needs who are not, at least temporarily, able to assist themselves with the goal of helping them return to independent, community living.

BASIS

NC G.S 108A-103 Article 6 requires that an APS evaluation shall be completed within 30 days for allegations of abuse or neglect and within 45 days for allegations of exploitation. NC Administrative Rule: 10A NCAC 71P .0604 requires that applications be processed and a notice approving or denying the application stating the effective date be mailed within 45 calendar days from the date the application form is signed for individuals aged 65 and older, and within 60 calendar days for those younger than 65.

A Closer Look: State-County Special Assistance Performance Measures

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes two State-County Special Assistance Measures. These measures address the timeliness in which the County DSS processes applications for State-County Special Assistance (SA), which pays for room and board for low-income individuals needing care in an assisted living facility. NC Administrative Code (10NCAC 71P.0604) sets the timeliness requirement for processing SA applications.

1. The County will process 85% of Special Assistance for the Aged (SAA) applications within 45 calendar days of the application date.

RATIONALE

Individuals in need of placement in an assisted living facility generally require prompt placement to avoid further decline in health or possible harm. State-County Special Assistance (SA) pays for room and board for eligible individuals in a licensed assisted living facility. Timely receipt of these benefits is essential to ensure proper care and treatment. While state rule does not specify a percentage rate, 85% was selected because counties may encounter extenuating circumstances that preclude them from completing a timely determination of eligibility. Timely determination for 85% of applications indicates substantial compliance with the state rule.

BASIS

State administrative rules require that applications be processed and a notice approving or denying the application stating the effective date be mailed within 45 calendar days from the date the application form is signed for individuals aged 65 and older.

- NC Administrative Rule: 10A NCAC 71P .0604

2. The County will process 85% of Special Assistance for the Disabled (SAD) applications within 60 calendar days of the application date.

RATIONALE

Individuals in need of placement in an assisted living facility generally require prompt placement to avoid further decline in health or possible harm. State-County Special Assistance (SA) pays for room and board for eligible individuals in a licensed assisted living facility. Eligibility for SA also qualifies an individual to receive Medicaid benefits. Timely receipt of these benefits is essential to ensure proper care and treatment. DSS staff are required to verify several factors to determine eligibility related to income and assets.

While the state rule does not speak to a percentage rate, 85% was selected because counties may encounter extenuating circumstances that preclude them from completing a timely determination of eligibility. Timely determination for 85% of applications indicates substantial compliance with the Rule.

BASIS

State regulations require that applications be processed and a notice approving or denying the application stating the effective date of the payment be mailed within 60 calendar days from the date the application form is signed for individuals younger than 65.

- NC Administrative Rule: 10A NCAC 71P .0604

2026-27 & 2027-28 NCDHHS/COUNTY MEMORANDUM OF AGREEMENT

WORK FIRST PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Adult Services
Child Support Services
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WHAT ARE THE PERFORMANCE MEASURES?

In 2017, the North Carolina General Assembly passed the Family/Child Accountability and Protection Act/Rylan's Law – Session Law 2017-41. The law requires all counties to enter into an annual agreement with the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) for all social services programs excluding medical assistance (NC Medicaid). The goal of the annual agreements is to support the provision of consistent, quality child welfare and social services that ensure the safety, health and well-being of children, adults and families served across North Carolina.

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Why Were These Work First Measures Selected?

The NCDHHS-County Memorandum of Agreement includes two Work First performance measures. Together, the two measures assist families in receiving timely benefits to help with reaching their goals of self-sufficiency and reducing the need for public assistance programs. Providing timely assistance to eligible county residents is a provision of the federal block grant funding.

BASIS

Title IV-A of the Social Security Act (SSA) and The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) provide the foundational guidance for the government's accountability in assisting needy families with children. Title IV-A addresses the required submission of a State Plan in which the State program defines timelines for the determination of assistance.

FEDERAL COMPLIANCE INSTRUMENT

The Administration for Children and Families (ACF) assesses states for compliance with federal regulations. Title IV-A of the SSA requires that eligibility determination must be provided in a reasonable and prompt manner (timely). The North Carolina TANF State Plan defines reasonable and prompt manner or timeliness for applications as 45 calendar days from the application date. The timeliness for the recertification for a cash assistance is no later than the last day of the current certification period.

A Closer Look: Work First Services Performance Measures

1. The County will process 95% of Work First applications within 45 days of receipt.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that families receive the Work First benefits for which they are eligible in a timely manner. Families that participate in the Work First Program rely on this service for cash assistance, job placement, training and education. Timely processing of applications ensures that applicants can access these services quickly and begin to receive services that lead to self-sufficiency.

BASIS

This performance measure determines the state's conformity with Title IV-A of the Social Security Act to provide eligibility determination in a reasonable and prompt manner. NC General Statute and the NC State Plan provide the basis for program policy.

- North Carolina General Statute: NC GS 108A-31
- State Plan: 2026-2028 TANF State Plan Final | NCDHHS

2. The County will process 95% of Work First recertifications no later than the last day of the current certification period.

RATIONALE

The intent of this measure is to ensure that families who were previously determined eligible for the Work First program continue to receive assistance and benefits without an unnecessary interruption in their benefits and case work services.

BASIS

This performance measure determines the state's conformity with Title IV-A of the Social Security Act to provide eligibility determination in a reasonable and prompt manner. NC General Statute and the NC State Plan provide the basis for program policy.

- North Carolina General Statute: NC GS 108A-31
- State Plan: 2026-2028 TANF State Plan Final | NCDHHS